

DIVINE ORACLES

THE TRUE
ANTIDOTE⁴
AGAINST
DEISM,
AND
FALSE CHRISTIANITY;
OR, THE^h
CLEAR LIGHT

OF
REVELATION

CONTRASTED TO
THE DARKNESS OF A
BOASTED AGE OF REASON.

IN LETTERS TO A SON.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED,
INTRODUCTORY STRICTURES
ON SOME LATE WRITINGS.

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DIVINE ORACLES



B R I E F
INTRODUCTORY STRICTURES
U P O N L A T E
BLASPHEMOUS WRITINGS, &c.

A PERSONS' raising the dust of controversy against the holy scriptures, obscures not their lustre (however blinded he may be himself) but like the Sun they shine with unclouded light, far above little emmets encompassing themselves in clouds of dust.

It is said ; let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth, but woe to him that striveth with his Maker. And whose heart can endure, and whose hands can be strong, when the woe falls with all its weight ? However great a person may be thought to be, he is quite unequal to a combat with his Maker, and is but an emmet of a larger size.

The abilities of a writer, and the beauty of his style go far in gaining him proselytes. Words are the dress of thoughts, whether those thoughts are truths or lies ; and the beauty of the dress, draws no small share of attention in favour of the writer. An attorney, who in the cause of falsehood employs all the force of eloquence, may so charm his hearers, that they will have no ear for plain truth, appearing in a plain dress, upon the opposite side ; show and appearance

ance often captivate the inclination and draw with it the judgment in its favour.

The force of the language of the Author of the Age of Reason is well known. The strokes of his pen are sufficient to convert many to any falsehood he wishes them to embrace. The world not long since, has been presented with a specimen of his abilities, displayed against Him in whose hand his breath is. His pen dipped in the blackest falsehood, has shed blasphemies against the Lord of Glory, who in the days of his flesh, bore the blasphemies of this man's predecessors.

Sordid interest actuated his pen; he saw that infidelity was in the height of fashion, and that blaspheming Jesus would turn to his worldly advantage; and like an attorney, ready to display his talent in any cause whatever, he at once blasphemes the word of God, trumpets his own fame, and gets his reward. Had he lived where it would have turned to his ignominy, it is presumed his pieces had never seen the light.

Could he have found his interest in painting the Christian Religion in beautiful colours, it would receive no benefit from it; nor can it receive any damage from his representation of it. It stands on a basis firm as the everlasting mountains, the truth of God; and will triumph when men greater than he, and even kings shall call on the rocks to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.

Though multitudes are willingly carried away with plausible language, in a case of life and death, and in the concerns of that life whose length no pen can describe, yet none of God's designs in his word can be frustrated.

The holy scriptures declare themselves to be the word of the living God. No man may presume to dictate in what way God's word shall be communicated. It must be in the way, which he pleases, who gives no account of his matters.

It is written Psalm 68, 11. The Lord gave out the

the word, great was the company of those who published it. The prophets, and apostles, and all that were inspired, make up this company. Beautiful upon the mountains are their feet, bringing good news from a far country in one hand, and full evidence of their mission in the other. The testimony they bring is not their's but God's. It is the King's Proclamation, and they are only heralds. It is written, where the word of a king is, there is power. The testimony in the scriptures is all divine. It stands high above all the assaults of the most subtle and powerful upon earth. The blows men aim against it recoil upon themselves. He that sits in the heavens, laughs, and hath in derision, the most combined, and malignant force employed against it, Psalm 24.

The testimony of God is not moved by any opinion which either individuals or even whole kingdoms may have about it. Its being the fashion in France, or any other country, to make it of no effect to themselves, by tradition, in one age, and in another, to reject those traditions and the scriptures with them, does not affect the holy scriptures any more than the late convulsions and carnage in France affected the course or shining of the sun in the heavens.

Whole nations disbelieving the word of God, or perverting it from its native simplicity, and fathering their favourite plans upon it, does but fulfil its prophecies; the wisdom of men plotting against it proves their own folly; their power employed against it works their own ruin. Great is the truth and will prevail. When the curtain drops, and this world of phantoms disappears, realities will be brought into full view, to the anguish of many.

Then it will be manifest, as if written with a sun beam, that the scriptures are the word of that God whose voice spake the heavens and earth into existence, and the same forcible voice which calls up the dead from their graves.

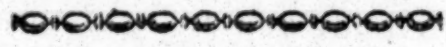
Events in Europe, for a series of ages have been a
fulfilment

fulfilment of scripture prophecy, as to the appearance, growth and decline of the man of sin; and events of the present age, are a fulfilment of a part of that prophecy yet remaining to be completed. Matters are ripening for an issue which is little tho't of; and indeed it is foretold both that men shall not expect it, and that in the twinkling of an eye it will fearfully surprize them. When they say peace and safety then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.

Whether it will be allowed, that the boasted reason of the present age hath been truly exemplified, and carried out into practice in France, the centre of it, I shall not examine; but it may be boldly affirmed, that the boasted reason of this author leads a man into a labyrinth of fond conjectures, and dreams, and there leaves him to perish, and turn to corruption, in fearful apprehensions of dreadful wrath beyond the grave; but the glorious Gospel of the blessed God abolishes death, brings life and immortality to light, plucks out the sting of death, and presents, as the only hope of guilty dying man, *Him* who is the resurrection and the life; in whom he that believeth, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in him, shall never die.




L E T T E R I.



DEAR SON,

TO deny divine Revelation or to hold the Truths it contains loosely is death. Sensible of your imminent Danger from a Deluge of Infidelity and false Christianity I address you. But it can only come of God to teach you and me the things which belong to our peace before they are hid from our eyes. What I now write is designed as a preliminary to other Letters upon the clear light of divine revelation contrasted with the darkness of a boasted age of reason. The expression an age of reason is plausible and captivating. The word reason is often abused and prostituted to the vilest purposes. Men boast of reason, and every one is fond of being thought to be under its influence. In all opinions a man entertains, in all actions which he does, he is ready to be persuaded himself and to persuade others, that he is under the guidance of reason; In all contentions between individuals or bodies of men both opposite parties alledge that they are influenced by reason. The same is true of nations at war, and what is called reason in one camp passes for its opposite in the other. The opposite opinions of men in religion are all professedly grounded in reason on both sides. In most of the practices of men however base, and even in the late barbarities in France, the actors no doubt alledged that they were governed by reason. Indeed the word reason, hath been a specious cover for the vilest opinions and practices.

practices. The boasted reason which men plead for, when examined, turns out to be the inclination of their hearts, or rather their lusts. We may see the spring and fountain head of this boasted reason in the serpent's reasoning to turn Eve aside from the simple voice of revelation, and her own reasoning corresponding to his, which closes Gen. 3, 6. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat. Three reasons are in her view which enclose three lusts ; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, which taking the place of a regard to God's voice, brought ruin. Awful it is to depart in the least from the voice of God, and give ear to our own lust, under the name of reason.

The Apostle declares the weapons of their warfare to be mighty through God for casting down logis-mous reasonings and every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. Reasonings are to be reckoned among the high things which thus stand exalted against the knowledge of him. The word rendered casting down signifies utterly demolishing, and in knowing the true God they are utterly demolished.

But to proceed ; it will one day appear, that men are as unreasonable (so to speak) in their reasonings against the truth of God's word as they would be in reasoning against the truth of the sun's shining, though in the latter there is not that guilt.

Should any one chuse to argue that there was no Sun in the heavens, we should be better employed in enjoying its influence, than in controverting with him. Should he chuse to argue that there is no God, we should be better employed, in attending to the plain evidence of conscience, testifying that every breath we draw, every beat of the pulse, every motion even of a finger, and every thought of the mind, proclaims a God, in whom we live, move and

have

have our being; while every thing above, and around us declares his glory.—So if any one chuses to reason against the light of the glorious gospel; we should be better employed in attending to the clearness of that light, and to the Apostles, commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God, than in pursuing them, into their labyrinth of reasonings; knowing that if the gospel be hid it is hid to them who are lost, and that the God of this world blinds the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine unto them.

The holy scriptures carry in themselves evidence that God is the speaker, and the truth of this is enforced upon illiterate men who have not access to profane history; and who are incapable of entering into argumentation. Indeed the scriptures are never believed in truth, but upon the bare testimony of God himself, speaking in them, aside from prophane history, and men's reasonings to prove them true. The Record, or the witness of the three in heaven, 1. John 5. 7, 8, 9, is plainly the witness of the one God in three persons, distinct from the witness of men. And it is there said to be greater than the witness of men; and thus it proved among the first believers in its great effects, and thus it will prove among all whose faith is unfeigned, or who have obtained like precious faith with them, through the righteousness of God and their saviour.

While we turn aside from the common tract of reasoning, the idea to be kept in full view, is, that the scriptures are the witness of God himself, carrying in themselves evidence that they are his truth. This is the only conviction of their truth, that is to any purpose. As to any belief men may have, on account of the professed belief of the country they live in, or the belief of their forefathers, or men whom they esteem for religion; as it rests on the testimony of men, it is as different as darkness from light from a belief grounded upon the record of God, and may be easily shaken, by the plausible reason-

ings or the sneers of an infidel. Indeed the step from such faith to infidelity is short and easy.

The same shift from one to the other, which hath taken place in France, may easily take place in any other nation now professing christianity, when their worldly interests favours it, and it suits the policy of the nation.

Among ourselves we see those who have received their christianity by tradition, and not upon the testimony of God, holding it by a very slender handle. They speak of the scriptures as doubtful, dark and inconsistent with each other. Indeed *they* are tho't scarce able to support any point of doctrine or practice, without the aid of some able voucher, and men find little more use for them, than to furnish a jest, or shew their abilities in argument, and eloquence upon detached passages, or advance their interest by shaping what they profess to hold from them so as to suit the general taste where they live. More confidence is placed in the writings of Seneca, or some other wise pagan, by many who call themselves christians, than in the holy scriptures. And those who would be esteemed guardians of the word of God (which spurns at such a thought) appear to be only guardians of their own interests. The christian world, so called, whose confidence is in the testimony of men and not the record of God, seeing their teachers so divided in opinion, and belief, as well as others, either rest satisfied in utter uncertainty, or anxiously grope like men in the dark, not knowing which way to look for truth.—But leaving them I would just say that where the scripture is believed upon the testimony of God, it comes not in word only, but in power, and mighty indeed are its effects, which must be manifest to any one who reads with but small attention, the lives of those who were under its influence in the beginning, which may be seen in the Acts of the Apostles and elsewhere.

I am your affectionate father, &c.

LETTER

LETTER. II.

DEAR SON,

THE holy scriptures present themselves, not as the word of man, but the word of God. They bear the stamp of divine truth, which accords with every man's conscience, but is pointed like a sword against every man's natural bias, and therefore cannot be the device of man. Wherever they have had effect they have borne down the reasonings and lusts of men.

There hath been an universal struggle of mankind against the scriptures, or the truth of God. The history of all ages, the history of all nations, even of the Jews the peculiar people shews it. Their conduct in the wilderness, and in Canaan, and the united conduct of Jews and Gentiles towards Jesus Christ, and the profession of his name shews it. It is manifest not only in persecutions on account of it, but in corrupting and perverting it. A corruption of the truth is as really a struggle against it as a direct opposition to it; even as an attempt to take Jesus by force and make him a King, was opposition to his Kingdom, as well as an attempt to root it out of the world. The corruption of the word of God in France in past ages was as really an opposition to the scriptures as their late rejection of them.

Nations who are now holding the scripture corrupted cannot boast of being less opposed to the Word of God, than France who has openly rejected it. All the nations who are now holding the scriptures in subserviency to their own lusts, maintain a struggle against them as well as France. The opposition of the world to the truth which appeared in the days of the Apostles hath not failed of being kept up to this day, either in rejecting the scriptures or corrupting them. The world hath uniformly maintained its opposition to the word of God in one way or other.

The way in which the scriptures have gained ground has been by the mere dint of evidence, bearing

ing down men's reasonings and inclinations; and this compelled the first publishers themselves to receive the same truth they published to others, for to them as well as others, it was like a sharp piercing two-edged sword.

The Apostle says, 2 Pet. i, 16, We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye witnesses of his majesty, &c. It cannot be conceived possible that Peter and others should invent and publish a Fable, which was firstly contrary to every natural inclination of their own hearts, and secondly would destroy every thing which they held dear; their interest, reputation, and comfort in life; and lastly would lead them into severest sufferings from the wrath of the world kindled against them, and bring life into the utmost danger, yea should perish in it unto the death. They must in such case act contrary to every principle that can be in man, and it might as soon be expected to see the stones falling upwards.

Nothing short of a firm belief of the things they testified, could influence them to suffer the loss of all things, and not count life itself dear; and this belief was firmly grounded upon the divine testimony, set before them in the most convincing manner. The apostle says, we were eye witness of his majesty. John says, 1st Epistle 1, 1. 2, That which we have heard, seen and handled of the word of life, that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, &c. And God shewed his concurrence with their testimony by the miracles he wrought by them. And not only the Apostles but a multitude of others, sealed the same testimony with their blood, in hope of life eternal through that truth; so far were they too, from the least apprehensions of its being a cunningly devised fable.

The Testimony of the Apostles, and the Prophets also, center in one point, the resurrection of Jesus, after his being delivered for our offences; from
whence

whence alone arises hope to man. This fact established the whole; and every part, both of the old testament and the new, however wonderful, or unaccountable it may seem, is established with it; and all seeming difficulties must vanish before it like mists before the Sun. Many have scoffed at the miraculous things reported, such as the account of Jofiah, Samson, &c. but instead of being thought incredible to one who knows the scriptures and the power of God, they appear wonderful displays of the power of that God with whom nothing is impossible. They have taken upon them too to say that many things ascribed to God in the scripture were unworthy of him, and have supposed themselves competent judges what was becoming their Maker. Swelled with self importance they do not conceive the distance between God and them, is far greater than between themselves and a worm. A child or an idiot, dictating a wise general or politician is not to be heeded. The disparity between the wisest man, and his Maker is far greater; and it is the highest presumption to determine what is fit and becoming him, whose ways are as far above ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth.

While the twelve authorised witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, declared God's testimony concerning his Son, and men saw what an effect it had on them, and beheld the miracles which God wrought by them, they were led to say that God was with them of a truth; and this testimony is not merely their's, but God's: and they considered God himself speaking by their mouth. Thus it is said of some of them, 1 Thess. 2, 13, that when they received the word of God which they heard from the Apostles they received it not as the word of man but as it is in truth the word of God. In like manner when this testimony of God which was first communicated by the voice of the Apostles, was afterwards communicated by their writings, in this way too, the word

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was received not as the word of man but as it is in truth the word of God. The same is true of all the sacred writings. The holy scriptures then present themselves not as the word of man but as the word of God. They point out God to be their author, without a train of reasoning, as the works of creation point out God to be their creator. He is read in one, as he is in the other.—They draw a black portrait of this lower world as under the curse, shew that every man by nature is a child of wrath, that every mouth must be stopped, and that the whole world is become guilty before God, and that no flesh can be justified in his sight in any way but through him who was made a curse in their stead, and thereby redeemed them from the curse. They give a portrait of the character of Jesus Christ. They present to us his features, his likeness. He is called the Word of God and there is that in them which bears his resemblance as the impression does that of the seal which makes it. As the world stood affected to him so they are affected to the word of God. Of himself he says, the world hateth me because I testify of its works that they are evil. The scriptures fully maintain the same testimony, and incur the same hatred. The professed liking of many is no more than that of the Jews to Jesus, when they would fain make him a temporal King; which very thing proceeded from a disrelish of his real character. Men's hatred of the real-truth in the scriptures hath been abundantly manifest in perverting and putting a false meaning to the words, as well as an open rejection of them. It is natural to all men, though fallen, to stand for what they think are their rights before their Maker, and to stand opposed to what appears to invade them; and as the word of God like a sharp two-edged sword gives a fatal stab to them, and to every hope of man aside from the death and resurrection of Jesus, leaving nothing but a fearful looking for of fiery indignation; it is impossible that the world should receive it, otherwise than corrupted and

and perverted from its native simplicity. It appears impossible in the nature of things that any man or number of men should invent a plan of Religion like this, so opposite to the bias of their own hearts; and the hearts of all others, with a view to its spreading in the world, without either worldly weapons or allurements; and utterly impossible it should spread if it could be supposed to be devised. Could we make the supposition that there were no scriptures in the world at this time. We cannot conceive it possible that they being fabulous should thus spread, nor indeed that they should be invented. So it has always been the case as human nature is the same in all ages i. e. opposed to them as they also testify.

The fact is obvious to all that they actually have spread over the world, testifying men's guilt, and only hope, in spite of the opposition of the world; and it cannot possibly be accounted for in any way but this, that they are in truth the word of God; that Jesus Christ the son of God, who gave his life a ransom was raised from the dead; and that ocular demonstration of this led the apostles at the risque of life to publish Salvation through him alone, in opposition to the world of Jews and Gentiles combined against it.

This testimony confirmed by miracles and sealed with their own blood forced attention in mankind, contrary to their desire, and made its way against violent opposition of heart, and was mighty through God to the pulling down their strong holds.——

This Testimony was carried far and wide, and when men in various parts of the world, saw the boldness of these witnesses, and that their life was embarked in their testimony, and beheld their miracles, and finally saw their blood shed, in full hope of eternal life through the Lord Jesus, they were awed about that which they stood opposed to, they had great reasonings among them; they wished to appear upon friendly terms with that which exceedingly troubled them. They used their arts with professors to en-
gage

gage them to lower down the force of the divine testimony, so to speak, to parley and to league with them. This had its effect on multitudes who had grown weary of the cross themselves. This coalition spread so far that in the days of Constantine the great, the minds of his subjects were so much in favour of christianity thus modified, that it appeared consistent with sound policy to establish it, in room of paganism as the religion of the Roman empire called the whole world. But before it was established, it ceased to be what it was at first. It became another Gospel or the gospel of Christ perverted. Here was a wide gate and a broad way opened, under the christian name, which they supposed led to life, and that many were going in thereat. From that day the world has adopted the name of christianity, in some form or other. The name has been retained, but the thing was lost or wrapt in darkness. The continuance of the scriptures is hence easily accounted for, From this time being construed to men's liking, they have been forced to become a tool of state, and an instrument of gain to priests, who sometimes locked them up from the common people, or when they let them out compelled men to take their interpretations of scripture, for the scripture itself. The word of God in their hands foretold, and testified against the corruption which they were barefacedly guilty of, as may be seen 2 Thes. 2 chap. 1. Tim. 4, 1. 4. 2 Tim. 3 chap. 2 Pet. 2d and 3d chapters, the Epistle of Jude, and the book of Revelations.

Thus because they knew him not, nor the voices of the apostles, they fulfilled them; as the Jews long before had fulfilled the voices of the prophets respecting Jesus. Acts 13, 27. The conduct of nations called christian, in every age since, in conformity to those mentioned, has been a standing fulfilment of the prophecies above, and an evidence of the truth of the divine testimony.

To return, it appears impossible to conceive of the
 scriptures

scriptures having so great a spread in any other way. So that the mind is as it were reined up to the time when the testimony was first published, and led to attend to that forcible evidence which had so mighty an effect on many, and occasioned a general awe among men, which led them to corrupt and establish christianity.

At this present time God is still upholding the same testimony by the writings of the prophets and apostles, though men would fain drown his voice by the noisy clamour of lo here and lo there, and by attempts to palm that upon them for his truth, which he has never spoken. His voice is still testifying to the world that its works are evil, and that there is no hope for any man aside from Christ Jesus. Its awful representation of the character of mankind or men, of which a summary is given in the three first chapters of the Romans, is confirmed by the history it gives of their conduct from age to age; witness the account of the Antideluvians, Babel-builders, Sodomites, Egyptians, Assyrians, &c. It is confirmed in the account it gives of the Jews from age to age in the wilderness, in Canaan, before and after the captivity, when the Messiah came and was among them, and after his crucifixion till the destruction of their city and temple and utter dispersion.

The Scripture does not stop like the histories of men with informing of events which have taken place, but proceeds to give a history of the future down to the end of time. It brings to view a constant war against the truth carried on by the old serpent, the devil or satan, deceiving and conducting all nations in the conflict, who are made drunk with the wine of the wrath of the fornication of the great whore, who pretending to be the spouse of Jesus commits fornication with the Kings of the earth who dress her out in rich apparel. Strikingly this has been verified in the wealth and honours both clergy and churches have obtained by a close connexion with civil rulers.

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But to return, such is the divine testimony of mankind and such the corresponding history. And there is no room for any to stand forth and say we are better than they; no in no wise, for there is none righteous no not one. In the view of all nations, ages, and of our own characters, the heart of a man must die within him, were it not for one character which knew no sin, but was made sin for his people that they might be made the righteousness of God in him. The scriptures then in all ages and at this present time, bespeak themselves to be the word of the most high God. The Book proclaims itself divine. It is said John 8. 47. He that is of God heareth God's words, which implies that God is heard in distinction from any man. And again 1 John 4. 8. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. The Apostles were appointed his ambassadors that by their mouth men might hear the words of God, and the words spoken or written by them are God's words.

In confirmation of the divine truth of the scriptures I might mention the fulfilment of their prophecy in the destruction of Jerusalem, and various other kingdoms. The Jews remaining a distinct people among all nations to this day, is a standing evidence of their truth. Another standing evidence is the great whore committing fornication with the kings of the earth which hath lived thus deliciously for ages; though it is true she is now declining fast with a consumption. And this too confirms their testimony; and particularly what hath happened in France of late appears a fulfilment of what is said Rev. 17, 16, of hating the whore and making her desolate and naked. The prophecy of Peter 2 Epist. 2. 1, 2. appears also fulfilled, where shewing that false teachers should rise under the christian profession followed by multitudes, says by reason of them the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. The People of France incensed at the pernicious ways of the priests take occasion

occasion hence to vilify the scriptures the way of a.

Although this is more or less true in every country yet there it appears in a striking manner. And authors take occasion to vilify the scriptures in connexion with the clergy, as if there had been some affinity between them, and the shame of their practices belonged to the scriptures. Yea they open their mouths in the most daring blasphemies against God's Word, and against Jesus Christ, who is the brightness of his Glory, and the express Image of his person. These things instead of weakening, confirm the faith of God's people, as they thereby see the prophecies fulfilled.

I am your affectionate father, &c.



L E T T E R III.

DEAR SON,

THE separation of the children of Israel from all other nations, in conformity to the scriptures, and their continuing distinct from them, for a series of ages, in the observance of laws, which it is the bias of man's heart to break away from; laws which made them a laughing stock to all other people, and their holding that testimony sacred which condemned their own conduct entirely, and left them without hope aside from mere mercy through the promised Messiah, these are a strong evidence of the truth of the revelation which they held to. Here was a whole nation kept together in this manner against their natural inclinations, a whole nation professing a firm belief of a revelation from God, a whole nation witnesses of miracles, a whole nation to judge whether there were any tricks or impositions, and that not merely for a day or a year, but for a succession of ages, a nation too that often shewed their inclination to turn away from God, and to be conformed to other nations, but contrary to their bias were brought back

back by threatnings and judgements.——In their course for ages they were led contrary to their natural bias by the direction of the Lord, as the two milch cows mentioned 1 Sam. 6. 10, &c. on whom there had come no yoke, went straight away from their calves tied up at home, drawing the ark of God in a new cart, lowing as they went. As the hand of God was manifest, in leading the cows against their bias, so it was manifest in leading Israel, both in the wilderness, and in Canaan; and one is an emblem of the other.

Israel was under the guidance of the lively Oracles of God, though it is true that they often rebelled.

The oracles to which pagans resorted for information, probably took their rise from what was observed among the Jews. But the children of Israel had recourse to an Oracle indeed, and had information from the most high God. When an oracle gives information, that voice alone, in distinction from all others, is the object of attention. When God revealed any thing to Israel, every word that he uttered, claimed their utmost attention. The Scriptures, the lively oracles of God, claim the sole attention, and are jealous of any voice being attended to aside from them. There is no attention due to any man whatever, any further than his voice echoes (as I may say) the voice of the Oracle.

When Pharaoh applied for the interpretation of his dream, Joseph answers, it is not in me, God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace. And while the answer comes from his own mouth, he says again, God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do. Gen. 41. 16, 28. So Daniel saith, 2 c. 30 v. on a like occasion, but as for me this secret is not revealed to me, for any wisdom that I have more than any living; but he asserts that there is a God in heaven, who revealeth secrets.——None of the prophets, or Apostles, make any more account of their own voices, when declaring what God spake by them.

Paul

Paul says, 2 Cor. 4. 7, But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. An earthen vessel containing gold and silver is overlooked, the treasure gains the whole attention. Again he thanks God 1 Thess. 2, 13, that when they received the word of God by his mouth, they did not receive it as his own word, but as it was indeed the word of God. And he informs, 1 Cor. 2, 1-6, that when he came to them declaring the Testimony of God, he came not with excellency of speech, wisdom, enticing words, but was with them in weakness and fear, and much trembling, and it was that their belief should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. He would be himself as it were thrown aside, as a wretched guilty sinner, that the testimony of God, of which he was the bearer, might have all its weight. He also tells the Galatians, to hold him accursed if he should preach any other Gospel to them, than what God had already declared by his mouth. He also asserts the same even respecting an angel from heaven. The scriptures in the plainest and most express manner hold forth the idea, that God is the speaker in them. Dives in torments, is reminded that if his brethren to whom he wished to give warning, did not hear Moses and the prophets, they would not be persuaded by his rising from the dead to warn them of the horrors of that torment, which he felt, and to which he supposed them advancing. This implies that God's voice by Moses and the prophets, was the only means of repentance. A multitude of passages expressly mention God as the speaker in the scriptures, it may suffice to quote a few only. The apostle quoting a passage from the Psalms expressly ascribes the words to God Heb. 3, 7, Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith to day if ye will hear his voice, &c. The prophet Isaiah pointing forward to the gospel day, says, chap. 52, 6, Therefore my people shall know my name; therefore they shall know

know in that day that I am he that doth speak, behold it is I. Language cannot more clearly express both that God is the speaker, and that he is also known to be so by his people. But I would more particularly notice Heb. 1. 1, 2. God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake to the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken to us by his son. Here God is held forth as the speaker in the whole revelation which the Jews ever had by means of the prophets. God hath spoken at what time he saw fit. He himself hath chosen the manner of speaking, whether by a voice himself or by a messenger; whether an Angel or a man; whether by voice or writing. He is above all controul in this matter. And we find even earthly princes claim a right of addressing their subjects, in the way they themselves chuse.

It hath pleased God most high, that his revelation to his people in the several ages of the world, should be chiefly by writing, and that they should look to the law and testimony and reject every voice that spake not according to that word. The greatest stress is laid upon what was written. The Lord repels each of the temptations of Satan in the wilderness, saying it is written thus, &c. Mat. 4 chap. Again he says, Luke 24, 44, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, &c. And Mat. 26, 44, But how then shall the scriptures or writings be fulfilled, that thus it must be.

Whatever God hath spoken by voice or writing hath been attended with evidence that he was the speaker. When Moses had a message to Pharaoh he gave evidence that God sent him. Exod. 7, 9, 10. And so it was too in his messages to Israel. The same may be said as to all the prophets and all the apostles.

In the beginning it seems that divine Revelation was preserved not by writing, but in the memory of the faithful, which being comprized in few words,
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might be more easily retained ; and the great length of man's age facilitated the preservation of it in this way. A revelation of the only hope of man was made to our first parents immediately after the fall, in the faith of which the saints lived. It is not necessary we should know all the evidence attending its being handed down to posterity: I would only make one remark here, viz. that the lives of the faithful, and the lives and opposition of the seed of the serpent both, were at this time and in all ages a confirmation of the divine testimony, and an evidence of its truth.—We read not of any writing till Moses. Then whatever he wrote under inspiration, respecting what had passed before, or took place in his own time, became a standing revelation for the Church in all ages. Additions were made to the revelation afterwards before their eyes, which when written, enlarged the book called the scriptures. Time after time additions were made, till the whole of the old testament was completed, which was probably about the time of Ezra.

These Revelations were made to God's chosen people and the oracles of God in writing were put in their custody ; and they were taught to regard them alone as the pure voice of God. A departure from this idea of them gave rise to the Talmud, a roll of traditions, by which they made the scriptures of no effect ; as Jesus charged them with doing and teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. The Apostle Peter points to this, 2. Epis. 2, 1 and shews that the same thing should take place under the Gospel, which prediction has since come to pass.

Through the course of revelation the grand point was from time to time more clearly revealed, till the fulness of the time was come, and God sent forth his Son made of a woman. The whole law was a school master to lead unto Christ, the end of the law for righteousness.

The appearance of the Son of God, was like the
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rising of the sun. He was ushered in by his forerunner John, by the ministry of Angels, and by many wonderful things which took place at his birth. His life, doctrine, miracles, death and resurrection, were a clear revelation to them who saw and heard; and when committed to writing by the Apostles, became a standing revelation to his Church. And what was further communicated to the Apostles, to whom God bare witness by signs, and miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, was a continuation of the revelation, and when written were to be a completion, of the revelation which began in the days of Jesus. The Apostles did not barely profess to be God's ambassadors as some do at this day, but proved they were so by their miracles. They had their credentials to shew it with the broad seal of heaven affixed to them. And what these chosen witnesses testified, finished the whole of God's revelation to man, which closes with an awful threatening to any man that shall add to, or take from the words of God, Rev. 22. 18, 19.

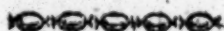
The divine Record is then closed, and as to any new revelations, dreams and visions, we may cry a-vant! It becomes with full purpose to turn a deaf ear to the noisy multitude, crying lo here and lo there, knowing that God is as really speaking, as if he were on earth, and that it is at our peril to have any other resort. To take our idea of the scripture doctrine one from another, is no more than receiving the witness of man, but we are assured, that he who believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record which God gave of his son, 1. John 5. 10, the Apostle says, let God be true and every man a liar; and again it is said, cursed be the man who trusteth in man, and blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord.

The Holy Ghost by the apostle gives a solemn caution, Heb. 12. 25. See that you refuse not him who speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him, who spake on earth, much more shall not we if

we turn away from him who speaketh from heaven. Fearful will be the consequence of attending to the words of man, instead of the words of God.

I will conclude this letter with a passage of Scripture, Heb. 10. 28, 31. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of Grace. For we know him that hath said Vengeance belongeth unto me, &c. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

I am your affectionate father.



L E T T E R IV.

DEAR SON,

THE invisible things of God from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead. Conscience agrees with this testimony of the Apostle. But while the works of creation enforce the thought that there is an eternal God, they give not the least information, how sinful man shall obtain his favour. It is not in the power of human reason to point this out. The reasonings of the world in all ages, have not afforded the least spark of light in this matter. Their opposition to each other proclaims their blindness. The whole world is in total darkness in this matter, and from the light of divine revelation. It is not uncommon for those at the greatest remove from light, to think themselves most enlightened. Every age is ready to boast of their light in Religion. Many have imagined, that men's light in religion has kept pace with their improvement in the Arts and Sciences; and that those ages

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wherein these have flourished most, have had most knowledge in religion. But there is no period of human History which has had any light at all in Religion, aside from Revelation. I will mention an age which other ages have agreed to esteem an enlightened age of the world. It was the Age when the Lord Jesus, and his Apostles, were on earth. Then the Greeks were in high renown for wisdom; then the Roman Empire having subdued the world, was in all its splendor, the Jews at the same time boasted of high improvements in religion.

I will now introduce what the Holy Ghost says of it. See Isaiah 60, 4. speaking of the time when the redeemer should come to Zion, he says: For behold the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people, but the Lord shall arise upon thee and his glory shall be seen upon thee and Gentiles shall come to thy light, &c. See again Luke 1. 78, 79. The day spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them who sit in darkness and the *Shadow of Death*, Acts. 26. 17. 18. Delivering thee from the people and the nations to whom now I send thee to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, &c. We may connect with it Is. 42, 6, 7. I the Lord have called thee, &c. and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the People, a light of the Gentiles to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house, &c.—These may suffice to point out the horrors of that darkness which then overspread the world, amidst all their boasted light. It is pointed out as under the dominion of the prince of darkness, as in the situation of prisoners in a dark dungeon, and the expression sitting in the shadow of death is enough to make one shudder.

To pass by other periods we may just notice that
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the present age is supposed to be very enlightened, and perhaps men never boasted more of their improvements and light in religion. But let the endless diversity of sentiments, with that professed charity for men of almost any sentiment, and doubtless in every point of doctrine, speak for itself, what light there is in the present age. I would only say that the present time is doubtless inclosed within that period mentioned, Rev. 8, 13. Wo, wo, wo, to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three Angels, which are yet to sound. Indeed the whole of that history of the future, the book of revelations, points out the earth as covered with darkness and full of the habitations of cruelty. It is true the scriptures are among men, but they cover that light from themselves, wresting the scriptures to their own destruction. They love darkness rather than light. The Light shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not.—The pleasing words with which men have amused each other, are like siren songs to lull to sleep, and fortify their minds against fear of that wrath which they may see pursuing man down to the grave, and may well lead to tremble with fearful apprehensions of what follows after death. Did men see their real situation with regard to their maker, black despair must cover the earth, aside from the knowledge of him, who says of himself, I am the light of the world. The holy scriptures which testify of him, diffuse light abroad, and contain glad tidings of great joy to all sorts of people. Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound, and who while they have the light, believe in the light, that they may be children of light.

I am your affectionate father, &c.

LETTER

L E T T E R V.

DEAR SON,

THE voice of God in the scriptures, is the fountain head of all information in religion. If our eyes be turned off from them, to any reasonings of our own, or reasonings of others, they meet nothing but darkness. While God calls for the sole attention, he points out the danger of its being turned off any where else. He says beware of men, and take heed that no man deceive you. The caution is very particular, that there be no man in whose favour you are strongly prepossessed, who should be suffered to insinuate a thought different from what God has revealed. Obedience to this command implies a most firm and unshaken reliance on the voice of God alone—As the word of God is the only light, so that alone binds the conscience. So that the conscience of every man living is set at the most entire liberty, from every other man in the world, and is subjected alone to that God with whom he has to do. Those who in truth hold divine revelation carry this Motto, Let God be true and every man a liar. They contend for the truth of God at all risques though it should lead to hold their most darling friends liars. This truth is called the faith once delivered to the saints, for which Christians are exhorted earnestly to contend Jude 2. It was once delivered while revelation was compleating, and when that was finished, there is no more delivering of it, but the word then delivered is to run through all the Earth as the witness or record of God. It is said 1 John, 5. 7, &c. That there are three which bare record in heaven, which three are one, and this witness of God is said to be greater than the witness of men, and 10th verse, He that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record which God gave of his son. Here is pointed out strongly that God's testimony is more forceable, and carries higher evidence than man's; and that those

those who do not believe upon his testimony, give God the lie. It is only in holding things revealed true upon God's testimony, that men hold God true ; in holding them false, they hold God a liar. All knowledge approved of in Scripture comes from God. It is said, John 6. 45, It is written in the prophets they shall all be taught of God, every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the father cometh unto me. So it is said of the holy ghost, he shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. It is by revelation that the father teaches, and it is only truth of revelation which the holy Ghost brings to remembrance.

We have the language of the new covenant, Heb. 8. 10, 11. I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour and brother saying, know the Lord, for all shall know me, &c. Here divine revelation written in the mind by God himself is pointed out as the only teaching, instead of man's teaching.

The Lord in opposition to the Pharisees in the 23d. Mat. 8, 9 verses says, But be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your master even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no man father on earth, for one is your father which is in heaven. The Disciples casting their eyes upon the world of Jews and Gentiles, saw men at that time as we may see them now, teaching and taught one of another, in religion (aside from God's teaching) and placing dependence on one another, as a child upon a father or master. But the Lord will not suffer it to be so among them. There was not a man on earth, whom they were to look up to as a father and master, either to teach or govern in religion. While God alone was to be viewed as a father, and himself as a master, they were to think of each other merely as brethren. And no man could be considered even as a christian brother, only as he appeared subject to the same father and maker alone. It is added neither be ye called masters, &c. 10th v. How far they

they should be from exercising authority over one another we read, Mark 10, 42, 44. After speaking of the great ones among the Gentiles exercising authority upon them, he says, so shall it not be among you. Whosoever of you will be chiefest shall be the servant of all.

The voice of God in the beginning called out disciples, and subjected them to him as a father, and to Christ as a master, and the discovery of this subjection in each other, brought them together as brethren, subject to one father and led them to the mutual offices of brotherly love. Thus Churches were raised up, and kept together who are called Christ's sheep, and heard his voice, and followed him. Nor are we allowed to think of Christ's disciples or churches being made in any other way.

But pretended disciples are influenced by the voice of man instead of God's voice. Though they may profess some regard for God's word, yet they take their understanding of Scripture from men, and not from God alone, and the word of God is made of none effect through their tradition. Worldly churches are brought together by human persuasion and eloquence, by the fashion of the country where they live, by worldly allurements, and in some cases by human authority and worldly force; and by the same means are they kept together. And it is far from their thought that churches can be formed, and held together by the power of the divine word, aside from human aid. Yet that must hold true spoken, Zech. 4, 6. Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. And we are not allowed to speak of any spirit but what speaks in the scriptures. For the Lord says of the Holy Ghost he shall not speak of himself—he shall take of mine and shew it unto you—and whatsoever he hears that shall he speak—and the things which Jesus speaks he brings to remembrance. His agency appears to be entirely in and about the scriptures. The words of
revelation

revelation then they are spirit and they are life agreeable to John 6. 6, 3.—The effect of God's teaching in revelation at first was to make the disciples of one heart and one soul. The effect of man's teaching appears, in the diversity of opinions at this day, and in the language being divided, and confounded, as in the building of Babel. The mischiefs which have followed man's usurping the place of God in teaching and exercising authority, are manifest every where, not merely in the mother of Harlots but in her numerous train of prostitute daughters. Human teaching has led mankind to associate together in various sects, holding doctrines and ways of their own. Each of their sects hath looked for heads, leaders and teachers, in religion, as in the common arts or professions in life; and have trained up youths to a more thorough knowledge of *their* plan of religion, that they may become teachers, and leaders to instruct others, and defend their faith whatever that faith happens to be. And here is supposed to be the fountain head of information; and here it is judged proper to resort for instruction, as we resort to men trained up to any art or science, to get information about it. It is true this is not the only resort for instruction, for it is common for every man to teach his neighbour and in his turn to be taught by him. In general there is no dependance on any thing else but human teaching in religion, for though some individuals professedly resort to the scriptures, yet it appears that they will have no weight with them against the peremptory assertion of a darling teacher, in whom the highest confidence is placed.

It is not denied that human teaching has in the concerns of this world contributed greatly to the stock of knowledge. This is manifest in the mechanical arts, in navigation, commerce, husbandry, &c. So exercising human authority has had a salutary effect in the societies of this world, securing life and property and promoting order. But in the concerns
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of that life beyond the grave, they both have had an opposite effect.

In the early days of christianity, it was agreeable to the natural bias of man's heart, (even as it is now) to thirst for some teaching beside God's, and different from his, and so they heaped to themselves teachers, having itching ears who turned them from the truth to fables. In like manner they were impatient of being under the entire controul of God in his word, and were desirous that man should share the authority with him, and their consciences became subjected to human authority. They allowed their bishops the authority of a father and they were each called Papa, or Pope, in express opposition to those words call no man father on earth. Though the name was confined afterwards to the Bishop of Rome as the general father, yet all the rest were still accounted as having the authority of subordinate fathers.

The Protestants as the name denotes, have protested against some of the enormities of the Church of Rome; still in general they are fond that man's teaching, should take the place of God's teaching by his word, and man's rule and authority, should take the place of his entire sway. Indeed their not allowing him to speak in his word so that he can be well understood by men of ordinary capacity, at once robs him of his prerogative of teaching & ruling both, for no one can either teach or rule if his words are unintelligible.

Men flattered themselves no doubt when they were departing from the authority of God, in his word that they were aiding his cause and advancing his kingdom. A grand kingdom has been built up it is true under the christian name as is manifest in the Church of Rome, and other national establishments. Grand temples have been erected, pompous services introduced, which in splendor might vie with the ancient pagan temples and services, in whose place they came. These have drawn admiration

tion on earth, but none from him who fled, when they would once have taken him by force, and made him a king. When the Supreme God looks down from the height of his sanctuary, and from heaven beholds the earth, it is not to take pleasure in the pompous parade of these temples, but it is to hear the groaning of the prisoner and to loose those who are appointed to death, to declare his name in Zion; &c. Psalm 102: 19, 20. His eye is turned from these; and his ears are open to a poor wretch though in a dungeon, who durst not lift up his eyes; but smites upon his breast crying, God be merciful to me a sinner. And where two or three such are gathered together in his name; there he is in the midst of them.

I am your affectionate father; &c.



LETTER VI.

DEAR SON,

ONE confirmation of the divine truth of the holy Scriptures, is, that incontestible facts forcibly set forth the same testimony with the Scriptures; in many instances while men practically deny both. I shall only instance the testimony of both scripture and fact; as to the wisdom of this world in matters of religion; which mankind are bent to make high account of; against their joint evidence of its vanity. See 1 Cor. 1. 19, 22. It is written I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them who believe; ver. 27. God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. 3 chap. 19, 20. The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, for it is written

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he taketh the wise in their own craftiness ; and again, the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain, 182. If any man among you seemeth to be wise, let him become a fool that he may be wise. The words need no comment. We cannot conceive of language more forceably pouring contempt upon all that wisdom so highly esteemed among men.

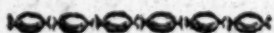
This testimony of the Holy Ghost concerning the wisdom of this world, was strikingly illustrated by facts, in the Apostle's day ; and it is not less so in the present day. The more a person is informed of the several religious opinions that have been, or are now in the world, the more full will be his evidence of this truth. The vast variety of sects and plans of religion in the world, which are opposite to each other, have been the product of man's wisdom ; for in the first place they originated from wise men, who invented and set them afoot, for if each sect was traced to its beginning, it would appear that its founder was a wise man of more than ordinary capacity. Secondly, wise men have been selected, as teachers, champions, and defenders of them from age to age ; and though there may be a difference as to their wisdom, yet the stress of their defence has been upon men that were the most wise. Thirdly, they have mostly been under the patronage of civil rulers, who are allowed in general to be of the wisest of the people ; and these have exerted their power, in connection with the religious teachers, to build up the religion that is in fashion, among their subjects, whatever it may be. In this way, most, if not all the sects in religion, have been reared up and supported, confronting each other. Thus human wisdom appears in the whole affair, and as it were stands proclaiming its own folly, inconsistency, and contradiction.

Should one apply to the wisest man in France, or China, or any other country, for information about religion ; each of them might appear to answer wisely ; but no one aside from revelation could produce
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more than a mere conjecture, couched in wisdom of words, and probably their answers would be all contradictory.

Human wisdom by cooking the scriptures for men's palates, hath not only raised up a multitude of sects, called christian, but also hath led them mutually to esteem each other for wisdom, and piety; while holding doctrines and practices opposite to each other. They care not what reputation the truth of God has, and it will be suffered to fall in the street, provided they extract to themselves a name for wisdom and piety, with an easy living. Here indignation might rise, but God says vengeance is mine! We may be sure that truth will prevail, and all its purposes will be fulfilled. To some it will be the favour of life unto life, and to others, of death unto death. Happy they who are made partakers of its afflictions according to the power of God, who calls them with an holy calling, according to his own purpose and grace, given them in Christ Jesus, before the world began.

I am your affectionate father, &c.



LETTER VII.

DEAR SON,

WE may now turn our attention to the scriptures as the only safe guide in religion, and altogether sufficient for the grand purpose of man's salvation. Simon Peter upon a particular occasion says, Lord to whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life. The words of Jesus in the scriptures are the words of eternal life. How they are so appears Acts 11. 14. Who shall tell the words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. It is said, the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it. Eccles. 7. 11. It is expressly declared to be life eternal to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, John 17.

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his knowledge is conveyed only through the scriptures. Jesus also prays, sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth. We are told, Psalm 12. 6. The words of the Lord are pure words as silver tried in a furnace, purified seven times. The Psalmist's 19th Psalm, after pointing to the heavens as declaring the glory of God, and setting before us his handy work, &c. in the 7th verse, and on, shews the far superiour light of revelation as perfect; converting the soul, making wise the simple, enlightening the eyes, rejoicing the heart, &c. and then speaks of it as more to be desired than fine gold, and sweeter than the honey-comb. Upon a certain woman's crying out, blessed is the womb that bare thee, &c. Jesus replies, yea rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it, Luke 11. 28. He rather fixes the blessedness here, than upon even being the parent of the son of God. The first of his parables, that of the sower which is recorded by three evangelists and closes with this cry, he that hath ears to hear let him hear, points out that as the harvest originates from the seed cast into the ground so his own harvest which was to be gathered in at last, would all originate from that seed the word of God. So that whatever is great, good, or desirable in his kingdom rises from that seed the word of God. He however shews that where it is not understood, is catched away by Satan, or is choaked with cares, the seed is made of none effect. It is said Jam. 1. 18, of his own will begat he us with the *word* of truth, &c. and 2. 12. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness, &c. and receive with meekness the *engrafted word* which is *able* to save your souls. It is well known that a graft inverted in a thorn bush will bear fruit partaking of its own nature, and not that of the thorn: So the word of God engrafted, bears fruit as it is said, Coloss. 1. 6. That the word of the truth of the Gospel bringeth forth fruit. They are said to be begotten by it, and it is expressly said to be *able* to save

save the soul.—The Apostle Peter speaks of the saints as being born again of incorruptible seed by the *word of God* which liveth and abideth forever. He then speaks of all flesh as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass, but the word of the Lord endureth forever, and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you while all flesh turns to corruption, and all their glory withers, the word of the Gospel is held forth for dying man to confide in, as everliving, and able to give him life, though he finds his flesh and his heart are failing. How excellent this word!

✓ The Apostle says of Timothy, that from a child, he had known the holy scriptures which are able to make wise to salvation, and then adds, all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, 2 Tim. 3. 15, 17. At parting with the elders at Ephesus he says, Acts 20. 32. And now brethren I commend you to God, and to the *word* of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all them who are sanctified, &c. We may notice three expressions quoted above, James says it is able to save the soul. The passage from Timothy says, it is able to make wise to salvation, this last quoted says, it is able to build up and give the inheritance, &c. They are full to one purpose. And the Apostle commends his brethren only to God and this word as all-sufficient. There had been no safety in commending to any man, however eminent, or to his own strength, or any thing under the sun but the word of God's grace.

It is said, Deut. 8. 3. And he humbled thee, &c. that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by *every word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord, doth man live. Jesus in reply to the tempter quotes these words,

words, Mat. 4. 4. The end of Israel's severe trials, was to bring to this point of knowledge, that God's word was their life, and as man's natural life must fail without sustenance, so his life beyond the grave must fail but for the word of God. Agreeably we read the just or justified shall live by faith or through the truth believed. The grandeur of the subject seems to forbid descending to any particular notice of the length men have run in vilifying this word, which one would think scarcely possible had he not daily evidence set before him.

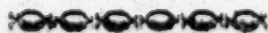
One text more may be noticed, Is. 55. 10, 11, 12. For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither again but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be which goeth out of my mouth, it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. Here we are reminded whose mouth it proceeds from to inspire with awe : it is cloathed with the authority of him who speaks. Again it is like the rain, which fails not to clothe the earth with verdure, and furnish sustenance for man and beast, ministering life and vigour. All the verdure, life, and vigour of Christ's kingdom arises from the word of his mouth. And this word doth not return to him void, like a messenger unable to perform his errand ; but fully accomplishes the purpose for which it is sent forth. It effects all that God designed that it should on the earth.

The word from the same mouth at first said, let there be light, and failed not of producing it. It said also, let the earth bring forth grass, and herb, yielding seed and the fruit tree yielding fruit, whose seed is in itself, after his kind, and its force continues in vegetation from year to year ; as also the source of that word be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, continues renewing the face of the earth, though

one generation passeth away, after another. So his word in the scriptures hath had, and still will have its full effect, in gathering in all his chosen people, that not one be lost. And though an apostle may be bound, yet the word of God is not bound. Yea those things which appear like checking its progress, often turn out to the furtherance of it. It hath its free course, and makes its way through gates of brass, and bars of iron. Without human aid it will triumph over all the force of men and the powers of hell.

Its effects are not splendid in this world, in the eyes of those who like the Jews, are thinking of a temporal kingdom for the Messiah. The kingdom formed by it, cometh not with observation. A bruised reed and the smoking flax are fit emblems of it. But hereafter it will appear conformable to him, who though once crucified in weakness shall appear in his glory as the only potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Faint must be our conception of the splendor of his kingdom at that day, when those whom he calls his sheep, who hear his voice, and follow him, in sufferings; are all gathered together in one general assembly, to share in his glory, and shall appear as one grand royal family, crowned with glory and honor and immortality. Then the issue of hearing God's voice in the scriptures will be strikingly manifest, while this world is smoking in ruins.

I am your affectionate father, &c.



LETTER

L E T T E R VIII.

DEAR SON,

SUNDRY striking passages of Scripture upon the energy of God's word were omitted in my last, which I will mention in this, and finish with some remarks upon the resistance the truth has met with in the world.—It is said, Jer. 23. 29. Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord? and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Heb. 4. 12. For the word of God is quick (or living) and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It is said of numbers who received it that they were pricked in their heart. While it gives a deadly stab, it conveys a salutary balsam. While it demolishes the hopes of man, it presents a grand reason of hope through the blood of Jesus.—Its force as the grand weapon of the Apostle is expressed, 2 Cor. 10. 4. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God, to the pulling down strong holds, casting down reasonings and every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.—This brings to mind the idea of a strong fortress demolished by powerful artillery. Mighty were the effects of God's word in the Apostle's days. It came not in word only but in power and in the holy ghost, and in much assurance. It wrought effectually in them. They turned from idols to God, to serve the living God and wait for his son from heaven, 1 Thess. 1. 9, 10. The course of the whole could of witnesses mentioned Heb. 11th chap. and the course of their followers under the new testament was opposite to the course of this world and to the bias of their own hearts. They were influenced by the word of God and something supernatural appears in their course all one way, as if a stream should turn about and run towards its source. The

The two witnesses which prophecy 1260 days, clothed in sackcloth, called the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the whole earth appear to be the old and new testament, and it is said if any man hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies, and they have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy to turn water to blood and to smite the earth with plagues as often as they will, as God's word of old did by Moses, see Rev. 11. 3, 7. The fulfilment of their prophecy particularly under the seven trumpets and seven vials is smiting the earth with plagues, and in the just judgment of God falls on those who received not the love of the truth. Their shutting heaven that it rain not in the days of their prophecy appears to point to the same thing mentioned Rev. 7. 1, under the similitude of holding the four winds of the earth, the consequence of which is dearth and destruction. As to fire proceeding out of their mouth and devouring their enemies, it leads us to think of the last effect of the scriptures upon those who abuse them, and reminds of what Jesus says, John 12. 18. He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day. Here we see the power of the supreme judge as it were attributed to the word of God in the last awful decision. Then their threatnings will burst forth like fire which had been long concealed, vomited from their mouth, and it will appear that heaven and earth shall sooner pass away than one jot or tittle of them shall fail.—The conclusion of the whole book of revelation points out the curses of the man that shall dare to add to or take from the words of God, Rev. 22. 18, 19.

It is said, Psalm 138. 2. Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. The voice of the Lord is indeed powerful and full of majesty. His word called up the heavens and earth into existence,

Heb. 11. 3. And the heavens and earth which are now by the same word are kept in store reserved unto fire, 2 Pet. 3. 7. And the hour is coming when all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth to the resurrection of life, or resurrection of damnation. John 5. 28, 29. —God's voice in the scriptures is from the same mouth, and deems it no usurpation to be counted equal with that voice which raises the dead.

The state of mankind as to believing this holy word, is not unlike that of the Jews, who under clear evidence came round Jesus saying, —how long dost thou make us to doubt, if thou be the Christ tell us plainly.

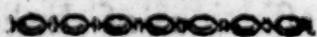
However light the scripture is accounted among men, yet Jesus Christ is said to tremble at this word. For thus speaks he whose throne is the heaven, Is. 66. 2. To this man will I look to him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and *trembleth at my word*.* And as to those who tremble at the same word in conformity to him it is said, 5th verse, Hear the word of the Lord ye that *tremble at his word*, your brethren who hated you and cast you out for my names sake said, let the Lord be glorified, but he shall appear to your joy and they shall be ashamed. Jesus declares, Mark 8. 38, that whoever is ashamed of his words, of him he will be ashamed when he comes in his glory. The Saints in every age, afraid of their own lusts under the specious shew of reason, have thought themselves bound to believe what they are told by God, and to do as they are bidden by him, without adding or diminishing, avoiding vain reasonings. They have been from age to age in the midst of an adulterous generation, who under a boast of reason have always resisted the truth. And no doubt but that a boast of reason hath run through the

* This passage must be understood to refer to Jesus Christ in whom alone God is well pleased.

the whole resistance it hath met with from infidels and corrupters of the truth, whether we think of Pharaoh, Korah and company, the Israelites proposing a captain to lead back to Egypt, or opposed to the report of the spies, or the whole resistance in the wilderness and Canaan, by men of their own body or nations round them. No doubt but that the Jews boasted of reason in all their perverse cavils against Jesus, under the light of striking miracles, and in putting him to death. The same is true as to men's conduct towards the Apostles. The same is true as to the church of Rome professing to hold the word of God sacred, and yet making it of no effect through their traditions (as the Jews had done before) in whom was found the blood of many who were slain for the *word of God*. So at this day while multitudes profess to hold the scriptures to be the word of God, they openly deny its plainest truths, even that Jesus Christ is the son of God—that there is salvation in no other—and that he who believeth not shall be damned, contrary to plain assertions of the holy Ghost. The boasted light of reason has been the dictates of their own lusts, and not the light of their conscience. As to such unhappy men, the Apostle says, 2 Cor. 4. 3, 4. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them who are lost. In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. They stumble at the stumbling stone laid in Zion. They stumble at the *word*, being disobedient, whereunto also they are appointed 1 Pet. 2. 8. The fearful lengths men have gone, are a fulfilment of several prophecies, particularly 2 Thess. 2 chap. which foretels the rise of false christianity under the energy of Satan, and that for this cause God shall send them strong delusions that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness, see 2. 11, 12 v. Here is also mention
that

that this man of sin should be destroyed by the brightness of his coming. And from prophetic computation it appears, that the time of the second visit of Jesus is not far distant, when we are assured it shall be as it was in the days of Noah and in the days of Lot. It becomes those who have an ear to hear him saying, behold I come as a thief, and to bear in mind that exhortation, Heb. 2. 1, 5. Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard lest at any time we let them slip. For if the word spoken by Angels was steadfast, and every transgression received a just recompence of reward. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them who heard him; God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the holy Ghost according to his own will.

I am your's affectionately, &c.



F I N I S.

The Reader will please to correct the following Errors of Press.

- Page 12.—18th Line, for *perish* read *persist*.
- 13.—7th Line, for *Josiah* read *Jonah*.
- 24.—1st Line, read *it was ushered*.
- 25.—7th Line from Bottom, for *and from* read *aside from*.
- 27.—5th Line, for *doubtless* read *doubt*.
- 31.—14th Line, read *each of these*.
- 36.—6th Line from Bottom, for *inverted* read *inserted*.
- 38.—3d from Bottom, for *source* read *force*.
- 40.—7th Line, for *could* read *cloud*.

